Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening

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I. SUMMARY

The Elections Support Project (ESP) had several notable accomplishments this reporting period despite the deteriorating security situation. Throughout the period, IFES provided the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) with analytical information as well technical expertise in Information Technology (IT), Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and in the implementation of a new continuous voter registration (CVR) system. IFES also provided IHEC with support in the strategic and communication planning processes, held a series of important workshops (see Table 1), continued to provide operational assistance and made significant strides in strategic planning and communication plan support.

One notable IFES achievement this quarter was the finalization and publication of the IHEC Strategic Plan 2012-2017, which is now publicly accessible on the IHEC website. The Arabic version is available at: http://www.ihec.iq/ihecftp/2014/plan-st/plan-ar.pdf. The English version is available at: http://www.ihec.iq/ihecftp/2014/plan-st/2012-2017en.pdf. Also, with IFES' assistance, IHEC has made significant progress in finalizing the Communication Plan. This plan codifies the objective and timeline for establishing a sustainable public outreach infrastructure at

IHEC. More importantly, it provides the tools for IHEC to maintain a transparent and truthful presence in the media.

Finally, the opening of the IHEC Electoral Education Institute paved the way for offering educational and training materials and specific training programs to different electoral stakeholders. Its establishment is an effort to institutionalize the educational and training activities that will enable the stakeholders to carry out their roles and responsibilities more effectively.

Security issues and budgetary constraints remain a major issue to building long-term, sustainable infrastructure at IHEC. However, it is IFES' experience that IHEC remains committed to its long-term mission as an institution of transparency in its implementation of elections in Iraq.

Table 1: IFES-facilitated Trainings and Workshops, October 01 – December 31, 2014.

Date	Location	Title	Total Participants	# of Female Participants	National Office (NO)/Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) Participant Distribution
October 19 - 20	Erbil	T-SQL Training Workshop for five Kurdistan Regional Electoral Office (KREO) staff	5	0	0/5
October 21 - 22	Erbil	Lessons Learned Workshop on Voter Registration and Data Management	29	3	13/16
November 9 - 12	Erbil	Procurement, Bids, and Government Contracts Training (first session)	32	5	8/24
December 7 - 10	Erbil	Procurement, Bids, and Government Contracts Training (second session)	31	0	8/23
December 28 - 29	Erbil	IHEC Central and Governorate Communication Committees Planning Session	32	5	13/19
Total workshop participants			**129**	**13**	**42/87**

II.   POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL CONTEXT

Security

During this reporting period, Iraq continued to experience an escalated level of violence and conflict as the Islamic State (IS) forces increasingly targeted the Government of Iraq (GoI), which along with international support, has attempted to counter IS advancement.

At the beginning of October, the United States sent helicopters into combat against IS targets, until then, U.S. airstrikes were limited to fighter aircraft and drones. Also, Australian jets conducted their first combat mission over Iraq as part of the international effort to combat the IS militants.

On October 17, the United Nations (UN) Security Council urged the international community to support Iraq and its government against the IS and groups associated with it, and to strengthen and expand the airstrikes campaign. The Council also urged the international community to further enhance and expand support for the GoI in accordance with international law.

On October 20, President Obama confirmed that sixty nations have been contributing to the coalition against the IS. He also called the IS "a long-term challenge." Despite hundreds of airstrikes by the closing of the reporting period, IS forces remain within striking distance of Baghdad airport. At the beginning of November, President Obama approved sending up to 1,500 more troops to Iraq, roughly doubling the number of U.S. forces on the ground helping the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Kurdish Pashmerga forces to battle the IS.

Since October, the IS campaign in Iraq has shifted course. The IS lost control of three key strongholds in Iraq in November 2014, while Kurdish Peshmerga forces and the international coalition contested its control of Kobane in northern Syria. These losses have cost the IS the upper hand on some fronts, but the IS continues to conduct offensives.

Throughout November and December, there were three on-going combat fronts between the IS and the ISF, Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga, and the Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs) that include Iraqi Shi'a militias. The fronts are concentrated in the north and the west of Iraq, mostly in Ramadi and north of Baghdad. In the north, the IS efforts concentrated on targeting the Peshmerga forces in Kirkuk and Ninewa provinces. However, IS also engaged in activity in Kurdistan itself with a car bomb attack in Erbil outside the Erbil Governate building, on November 19, which resulted in four casualties. Meanwhile, the ISF and Iraqi Shi'a militias capitalized on their gains in Diyala province in eastern Iraq. The capture of Sadia and Jalula allowed the joint forces to conduct wider operations in the Hamrin Ridge and Hamrin Lake areas in Diyala.

Militarily, the IS suffered tactical military defeats during the period in addition to increasing attrition both in Iraq and Syria amongst its leadership. On December 19, Kurdish forces in northern Iraq celebrated their biggest victory yet over the IS after breaking, with U.S. air support, the lengthy siege of Mount Sinjar and freeing hundreds of trapped Yazidi. Additionally, in Mosul itself the IS have suffered attrition from air strikes and have faced increasing levels of insurgency from groups hostile to them in and outside the city. Additionally, the group mounted a series of mass murders against its own members for treachery or cowardice.

As of end of December, the IS consolidated its core strength, attacking close vulnerable areas, and posturing for new territorial gains. The raised intensity of the ground war in Iraq limits the IS to some extent, a condition which the IS will likely try to reverse. The IS's strategic culture depends upon seizing and holding the offensive. If the IS loses the offensive in battle, it may attempt to regain it by other means, such as opening new fronts in Syria.

The attack by an alleged IS supporter at a shop in Syndey, Australia on December 15, 2014 has raised fears of the international spread of the IS. The IS has publically and frequently encouraged attacks against the West. Since its declaration of the Caliphate in July 2014, the IS has instructed supporters in the West who cannot perform hijrah, or emigration to Iraq and Syria, to remain in place and organize. On November 13, the IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi released a statement accepting pledges of allegiance from groups abroad, declaring five wilayats, or provinces, outside of Iraq and Syria, and encouraging groups to "erupt volcanoes of jihad everywhere."

In Iraq, despite a stall in the IS advance following targeted airstrikes by the coalition forces supporting the GoI, the conflict seems far from over. The violence has triggered a humanitarian tragedy, with more than 2.1 million internally displaced people and countless casualties among the civilian population.

Finally, at the beginning of December, the GoI has taken measures to control an increasingly lawless situation in Baghdad by allowing Iraqi Shi'a militias and criminal networks to have freedom of movement. Shi'a militia members have carried out kidnappings and robberies in the capital using unlicensed vehicles, portraying themselves as high-profile officials passing through security checkpoints manned by the ISF without undergoing searches. Prime Minister (PM) Abadi's order to the ISF to seize such vehicles aims to decrease such kidnappings and robberies and restore the rule of law. The presence of criminal networks along with the concentrated presence of Iraqi Shi'a militias in the capital makes it hard to distinguish between activities of the militias, militias' members operating independently of their command, and purely criminal networks.

Political Situation

On September 8, the Council of Representatives (CoR) voted to install a new cabinet to form the government of new Iraqi Prime Minister (PM) Haidar Al-Abadi. However, the vote for the new cabinet did not include the important positions of Minister of Defense or Minister of Interior.

After weeks of negotiations, on October 19 the CoR approved a Defense Minister and Interior Minister. The two ministries are particularly important as each controls an array of security forces fighting the IS. For Interior Minister, a position overseeing the Iraq police forces, the CoR approved Mohammed Salem al-Ghabban, a member of the Badr Organization, a Shiite political group that controls a militia fighting alongside government forces against the IS. The Badr Organization had been pressing the PM Al-Abadi to name one of its members to reflect the party's

strong showing in the recent parliamentary elections. Abadi had been reluctant to pick a Badr candidate because he feared that appointing someone closely associated with a militia would jeopardize his plan for a more inclusive administration. For the Defense Minister, the CoR voted in favor of Khaled al-Obeidi, a Sunni from the city of Mosul that is now under the IS control. Six Kurdish members of the Cabinet were also sworn in after the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) had held out for a larger share of ministries than the three offered when the PM unveiled his government. The moves provided a stronger political foundation for the PM Al-Abadi to try to counter the IS grip on most Sunni areas of the country to the north and west.

In the four months after taking the office, PM Abadi took a number of rapid measures forging a common front against the IS fighters, rebuilding an effective army, and reasserting a degree of central government authority across Iraq.

On November 12, the PM – who also serves as the Commander in Chief of the Iraq Armed Forces – dismissed the Chief of Army Staff and top officials and commanders at the Ministry of Defense and the regional Operations Commands. These changes came after Abadi promised to make modifications within the military leaders as he said they largely failed to address the security situation. According to the PM Office, the personnel changes were intended "to consolidate the work of the military establishment based on professionalism and combating corruption in all its forms." Further, the PM continued the Government's crackdown on corruption and graft with the dismissal of 24 top Iraqi officials from the Ministry of Interior in conjunction with the removal of 50,000 absentee soldiers from the military payroll. "Ghost soldiers" were men on the army payroll who paid their officers a portion of their salaries and in return did not report for duty.

In the reporting period, one of the most important issue was finalization of a draft of the 2015 Federal Budget. On October 29, the CoR Presidency, in a meeting with heads of the political blocs at the CoR, decided to extend the legislative session, which was scheduled to end on October 30, for a period of one month in order to finalize the 2015 budget.

In mid-November, the Iraqi Finance Minister stated that the 2015 budget was expected to be tabled within the next week in the CoR and will total 100 billion USD. Iraq's budget is mostly derived from oil production (95%) and open sources reported the declining price of oil would lead to a 25 billion USD budget deficit.

On December 4, the Iraqi Federal Government and the Iraq Kurdistan Regional (IKR) Government finally reached an agreement over longstanding oil and budget issues. The agreement stipulates that the IKR Government will send a total of 550,000 barrels of oil per day to the Iraqi Oil Ministry, half of which will come from the disputed Kirkuk oil fields. In exchange, the IKR will receive a 17% share of the national budget, plus installments of as much as 1 billion USD to boost the capabilities of Kurdish Peshmerga fighters battling the IS.

The agreement paved the way for the adoption of the 2015 Federal Budget. However, the submission of the draft budget was delayed due to concerns over the market price of oil, which is expected to remain depressed for at least six months. This caused the individual provinces to re-evaluate spending targets as they pressed the central government for additional funding.

The first reading of the 2015 draft budget by the CoR took place on December 25 in the presence of only 229 of 328 members of the Parliament. According to the CoR procedures, the first reading entails reading the full text of the draft law without discussing or debating its contents. The draft was then referred to the Finance and Legal Committees of the CoR for examination and the drafting of an opinion that would be delivered during the second reading. The CoR adjourned and will reconvene on January 7, 2015 and the CoR has postponed a special session on the budget until January 17, 2015. Until the commencement of the second reading, the above two Committees, other parliamentarians, experts and the interested public have to examine thoroughly the draft budget and express an opinion before the scheduling of the the draft law for voting and adoption.

Reportedly, PM Abadi has attempted to act independently during his first few months in power; hovewer his position and ability to govern are only as durable as his governing coalition. The PM is still largely at the mercy of his political allies in the Shia bloc and, as seen in the struggle of getting the national guard program through the Parliament, it only takes a single objection from his own party or a junior coalition partner to quash plans that would otherwise serve as an important component to the fight against the IS and extremism.

Finally, in the reporting period, the IKR Parliament took further steps towards establishment of an Independent Electoral and Referendum Commission in the IKR. The IKR Parliament called for applications for the commissioners' positions to be submitted during the period between October 29 to November 10. According to Article 19 of Law No. 4 of 2014, the IKR Commission should be established within 90 days from the day of law publication in the official Kurdistan Gazette on September 4, 2014. Therefore, the Commission should be established on or around December 4. On December 3, the IKR Parliament appointed nine Commissioners for the Independent Electoral Commission and Referendum in Kurdistan. One of them is the current Erbil Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) Manager. However, at the end of the reporting period the Commission has not yet been established.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Objective 1: IHEC's Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Capacity is Strengthened

Building on the experience gained by IHEC during the drafting of the strategic plan, IFES continued assisting IHEC in finalizing the strategic planning document and during its

implementation phase in developing and building monitoring and evaluation processes that will allow for the continual review and assessment of the strategic plan.

Activity 1.2: Final publication and dissemination of the IHEC´s Strategic Plan

IFES initially expected the strategic plan to be published in Year 3; however, due to IHEC's delays in its finalization, the strategic plan was finally published in Year 4.

At the end of the quarter, IHEC adopted and posted the final strategic plan on the IHEC website (in English and Arabic) to ensure transparency and accountability. On September 22, IFES had submitted to IHEC the Strategic Planning document outline, which since then underwent a few changes by IHEC.

Immediately after the finalization of the draft Strategic Plan, IFES started working with IHEC to publish both the Arabic and English versions of the document for public relations and information purposes. IFES will work with IHEC to plan for wide dissemination of the Strategic Plan in both printed form and electronic media.

As noted above, the Arabic version is available at: http://www.ihec.iq/ihecftp/2014/plan-st/plan-ar.pdf. The English version is available at: http://www.ihec.iq/ihecftp/2014/plan-st/2012-2017en.pdf.

Activity 1.3: Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategic Plan and Annual Work Plans

Sustainable institutional capacity to conduct strategic and operational planning is built upon the bedrock of solid monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools. Review and evaluation is an ongoing process that is necessary to encourage continuous improvement, and provide evidence of the impact of IHEC's activities and an informed basis for decision-making and future planning.

IFES has developed the basic concept of country-led M&E and practical on-the-job training for M&E tool use. IFES has also prepared and submitted to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) a concept of the M&E workshops to be conducted in the next quarter. Participants will include members of the Strategic Planning Committee, staff from the IHEC Capacity Building Department (CBD) and members from other departments, such as the Public Outreach Department (POD).

Following these workshops, IFES will assist IHEC M&E staff in developing custom indicators to track implementation of the strategic plan for specific electoral events, as well as development of systems and procedures for operationalizing the M&E plans. IFES continues to work with IHEC to further cascade the plan development down to the division and section level within IHEC.

**Objective 2*: IHEC's Internal Management Processes and Systems are Strengthened*

IFES continued to support IHEC in enhancing financial and administrative capabilities as well as in implementing the continuous voter registration (CVR) and improving IT and database systems. IFES also supported IHEC in conducting an assessment of the training needs of the IHEC software developers.

On October 29, IFES' Chief of Party (CoP) conducted a presentation on project activities under the no-cost extension for the Board of Commissioners (BoC). In the follow up discussion, members of the BoC said that training a core team of software developers was an immediate need. On October 30, the BoC adopted a decision asking IFES to conduct an assessment of the training needs of assigned staff.

Following the decision, the BoC sent IFES an initial list of 26 IHEC staff members from the National Office (NO) and the Baghdad Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs) for IFES to assess their software development capacity, so that IHEC could select a group of nine staffers capable of developing the Results Tabulation Software for the upcoming electoral events and create a core IHEC Database and Results Tabulation Development Team. An additional four names were received for a total of 30 staffers to undergo the software developing knowledge and skills assessment.

IFES' Database Development Advisor (DDA) developed the testing methodology and materials. IFES used a two-stage testing methodology. The first stage of the testing was implemented using a standardized, paper-based, multiple-choice and simple answer test in four areas of knowledge including: general programming concept; Web development (including HTML, CSS and JavaScript); Visual Basic; and Microsoft SQL Server. The second stage was a computerized test involving development of a database-driven application.

The first stage of testing was conducted on December 4 at the IHEC Data Entry Center (DEC) with the participation of 28 IHEC staff members. IFES' DDA verified the results of the first stage of the capacity assessment and only one of the 28 staff members scored enough points to transition to the second stage of assessment; 8 more staff members scored from 40 to 57 points. A detailed report on the first stage of the assessment, with IFES' recommendations, was submitted to the BoC. As a result, the BoC decided to allow all 30 initially identified participants to undertake the second, practical stage of the test.

IFES held the second stage of the assessment on December 17 at the DEC. The second stage of the test was practically oriented and involved the development of database-driven simple application, using either VB .net or C# .net programming language. Three out of the 30 IHEC staff members did not participate in the test. The final report with results of the testing will be available and provided to IHEC by mid-January 2015.

Activity 2.1: Support the IHEC Finance and Administration Directorates to Improve Staff Capacity to Prepare and Execute Bids, Contracts, and Budgets.

In the last three years of programming, IFES cooperated closely with the Finance and Administration Departments of IHEC. One of the weaknesses identified recently is the lack of experience and skills of IHEC staff in preparation and execution of bids, contracts, and budgets.

To address this issue, IFES developed, in cooperation with the Capacity Building Department (CBD), a concept for a series of four workshops targeting staff at the NO and at the GEOs to train them on the procurement, tenders, and government contract procedures recently updated by the GoI to be implemented in FY15 Q1 and Q2 for the Finance Department and the Audit and Internal Control Department.

In the reporting period, IFES conducted two of the four scheduled workshops. On November 9 - 12, IFES conducted the first session of the Procurement, Bids, and Government Contracts Training in Erbil, with 32 participants (including five women) from the IHEC NO, northern GEOs, and the Kurdistan Regional Elections Office (KREO). The participants were staff members of the Monitoring and Internal Auditing Department Legal Units and Finance Department. The training was conducted by the IFES Procurement, Bids, and Government Contracts Local Consultant and the Director of Monitoring and Internal Auditing Department. The training materials included the procurement guide, which will be used by the IHEC staff members as a reference for the updated procurement instructions.

On December 7-10, IFES conducted the second session of Procurement, Bids, and Government Contracts Training in Erbil, with 31 participants (no women) from the IHEC NO, and the following GEOs: Salah Al-Din, Baghdad Karkh, Anbar, Ninewah, and Diyala. The participants were staff members of the Monitoring and Internal Auditing Department Legal Units and Finance Department. The training was conducted by the IFES Procurement, Bids, and Government Contracts Local Consultant and the Director of Monitoring and Internal Auditing Department.

Figure 1 Participants of the Bids, Procurement and Governmental Contracts Workshop November 9-12, 2014

The workshops objectives are designed to ensure complete understanding starting from identifying the needs to buy specific goods or services and the preparation of the technical specifications and the estimated cost, whether by procurement request form or the tender implementation and the

requirements of the preparation for the necessary documentation, also the procedures for advertising or direct invitation, analysis down to the authentication committee, and then contracting, implementation and exchange.

Activity 2.2: Advise IHEC on the implementation of continuous voter registration processes and decentralized data entry for voter registration

On October 21-22, IFES held the Lessons Learned Workshop on Voter Registration and Data Management in Erbil. The workshop was facilitated by IFES' Database Development Advisor (DDA) and attended by 29 staff members (including 3 women) from the IHEC NO and GEOs. The purpose of the workshop was to review the voter registration process conducted prior to the 2014 CoR elections and come up with recommendations for the future CVR. The final recommendations included among others: printing a photo of the voter on the card in case IHEC would decide to change the voter cards; not to print the

Figure 2 Participants of the Lessons Learned Workshop on Voter Registration and Data Management October 22, 2014

information on voter polling station number and sequential number in the voter list on the cards; and to find a mechanism for more convenient and reliable data transfer from the registration kits to the main server. The recommendations were submitted to the BoC for consideration and approval.

During the period under review, CVR has started in 239 polling centres in 11 GEOs: Najaf, Missan, Basrah, Qadissiya, Thi-Qar, Muthanna, Baghdad Rusafa, Baghdad Karkh, Kerbala, Babylon and Wassit. The selection on these centres was based on two criteria - the presence of permanent IHEC staff and the security situation. The western provinces, especially Anbar and Nineveh, were excluded for security reasons. No permanent IHEC staff are kept in registration centres in the Kurdistan governorates.

Only voters currently 18 years old or older are allowed to register. It was previously believed that voters that would attain this age by the date of the next election, scheduled for 2017, would be allowed to register. The CVR database is being kept separate from the old voter database, which will be used for all elections, including the District and Sub-District elections. The new CVR data will be brought into play only when biometric registration is complete.

At the end of the reporting period, some 200,000 citizens have been registered biometrically, mostly state employees. IHEC intends to fully roll out CVR in 2015 when budget allocations become available and additional staff can be employed. This excludes areas where the security

situation precludes the setting up of permanent registration centres. As the security situation is stabilized, these areas will be addressed. Training schedules have already been set up along with maintenance training workshops.

This very low rate of registration cannot be held as indicative of its success. Voter registration is currently only being promoted by word of mouth, and by local religious leaders and the religious authority in Najaf. Media campaigns are scheduled when budget allocations are released, and improved enthusiasm of citizens in the process is expected. As only 239 registration centres are active, the rate of registration will improve as facilities are made available to more people.

The current planning is to start with the main registration drive on February 1, 2015. The CVR draft operations plan proposes a joint operations room between the CVR Project Management and Operations for problem solving issues. IFES has been supporting this cooperative suggestion. The draft plan also includes the need for media cooperation. This aspect will need to be expanded, and IFES will support IHEC in this area.

Activity 2.4: Support to IHEC in introducing technology in elections

IHEC has started a process of introducing technology in the electoral process. The acquisition of its AVR system at the end of 2013 and the announcement of the intention to implement electronic voting (e-Voting) by 2018 are significant steps towards automation of the Iraqi elections. IFES will play an important role in the long-term viability of this process, both from strategic and advisory points of view.

On October 15, IFES' Chief of Party (CoP), Database Development Advisor (DDA), and IT-Technical Program Associate (IT-TPA) met with the IHEC IT Section Head to discuss IFES assistance in light of a UNOPS project closure. They agreed that IFES will assist the IT Section with following up on key projects for core IHEC IT infrastructure: the EMC company backup and recovery system project; the Cisco Call Manager license issue; and the Cisco project to replace defective old Cisco hypervisor devices with new Cisco catalyst 4500 series chassis. The EMC backup and recovery system project is crucial for the reliable storage and availability of IHEC documents and other essential data. The Cisco Call Manager and Cisco network equipment are essential for reliable functioning of communication within the IHEC NO and between the NO and GEOs as well as for proper functioning of the IHEC core network.

IFES' DDA continued working closely with the KREO IT/Database staff to identify their training needs. On October 19-20, DDA together with the IT-TPA conducted a two-day T-SQL Training Workshop for five KREO staff members in Erbil. The purpose of the workshop was to follow-up on the previous workshop conducted in September and to provide more in-depth training for Microsoft Transact-SQL (T-SQL) language, used to interact with Microsoft SQL Server and

manipulate data. The workshop was attended by staff members from the KREO Database Management, Operations and Administration Sections.

The IHEC BoC requested IFES' assistance in uploading the scanned result forms from the 2014 CoR and IKR Governorate Council elections general voting. On October 29, DDA together with the IT-TPA held a meeting with the Head of IT Section, Head of Voter Record (VR) Section, and staff members from IT and VR Sections to discuss the process. They reviewed the searching and viewing application for the result forms developed by VR Section staff member. The IT Section agreed to find suitable servers to host the searching and viewing application, database and scanned forms. IFES Advisors also suggested taking the most accurate information about Polling Center and Polling Station numbers from the DEC database. They also suggested combining separately scanned pages in a JPEG format to be saved as optimized and protected PDF documents on the Polling Station level. Finally, it was recommended to maintain the existing website design template. It was agreed that IFES will assist in development of the software and finding a solution for the conversion.

IFES' DDA worked on the solution to combine separately scanned pages in JPEG format to be combined and saved as optimized and protected PDF documents on the polling station level for uploading on the IHEC website. He reviewed several free-to-use libraries that can be used to generate PDF documents automatically and researched the solutions for bulk JPEG image optimization. He finalized the solution to combine separately scanned pages in JPEG format to be combined and saved as optimized and protected PDF documents at the Polling Station level for uploading on the IHEC website. He also finalized software for bulk JPEG image optimization and conversion to PDF format. The software was presented to the IHEC VR Section developer. The conversion of the documents has started. The uploading of the forms on the IHEC website contributed to the overall transparency of the results tabulation process.

IFES' advisors are also in the process of mapping out the core IT systems within IHEC in order to understand the distribution of IT services within the organization; offer recommendations on optimizing usage of the infrastructure; and address the areas of concern, especially within emerging technologies such as CVR and e-voting. In summary, the IT Department has indicated limited duplication of hardware with the CVR system, mainly in the area of storage. While the primary hardware is fully redundant (i.e. capable of withstanding failure of one or more components without loss of system functionality), this is not true of the CVR system. However, the CVR system servers are significantly under-utilized. With regard to communications, fiber-optic connections are not available in about seven of the governorates, and many of the VRCs do not have internet connections.

Finally, in the reporting period, IHEC requested IFES assistance in preventing hacker attacks on the IHEC website and increasing the security of the website. IFES' DDA, together with the IT-TPA, held a meeting with the IHEC Website Manager and discussed the issues. As the Naba

hosting company stated, attacks happen from different countries, including the U.S. and Israel. Attacks mainly targeted the content management system (CMS) of the website. According to the hosting company's report, attacks did not happen through the company's web servers but mainly through the hacking of the web editor's computer. The Website Manager stated that her team requires training in security. It was agreed to discuss technical details related to the website security together with the IHEC and Naba IT specialists. After the assessment, IHEC and IFES were able to identify weak points and produce a list of recommendations in order to strengthen the security of the system and also provide basic security instructions for the web editing team.

On November 23, IFES submitted to the CEO the website security assessment report with recommendations for improvements. The recommendations include, among others, establishing a secure connection to the hosting company through the means of VPN with strong encryption, ideally through the Cisco IPSec to ensure the secure transmission of data from the web editor's computer to the Content Management System (CMS), and installing an officially licensed strong antivirus, internet security, firewall, and anti-malware software on the web editor's computer to prevent potential CMS credentials theft.

Activity 2.4.1: Automated Voter Registration (AVR)

IHEC was trained by Indra, the vendor of the AVR system, on operational and maintenance procedures of the updated registration and polling station equipment. One hundred IHEC personnel were involved in this training in Turkey and Erbil.

On November 25, IFES' CoP and Project Manager met with the Deputy Secretary General of the BoC, Directors of the Capacity Building and Operations Departments and Head of Training and Procedures Section to discuss the upcoming cascade training for the CVR staff. The three-level training will target the members of the five regional CVR operations committees, the GEOs staff members and the Registration Centers staff (a total of 1,079). The aim is to train the staff on the operational procedures and maintenance of the verification and registration electronic devices. On November 26, IFES received a letter from the IHEC Commissioner who heads the CVR Committee requesting assistance in organizing the first level of training targeting 56 National Office (NO) and GEOs Data and IT Sections employees; and members of the Central and Regional CVR Committees. The four-day training (two sessions) will take place on January 18–21 and January 23–26, 2015 in Erbil.

IFES identified an issue in the mechanism used to transfer data from the registration devices to the central servers. Currently, data transfer is performed by means of a manual copy from the registration device to a thumb drive. This thumb drive is transported to the governorate office where the data is again manually copied and renamed onto a governorate level mobile hard drive before being transported to the IHEC offices in Baghdad for a manual import into the system. The process has many steps in which human error can cause problems, and is open to risk from a data

security or theft perspective. This process will need to be changed to reduce the risks of error and data security.

On November 2, IFES' Elections Technology Advisor (ETA) and Elections Technology Technical Program Associate (ET-TPA) held a meeting with the Deputy Head of IT Department regarding IT infrastructure within IHEC. The objective of the meeting was to get a clearer picture of the distribution of the available core systems and communications technology.

Based on the concern for the manual transfer of data from the voter registration devices to IHEC, a document entitled "Proposal for Electronic Transfer of Registration Files" has been prepared and submitted to IHEC. The paper outlines these issues, and included a recommendation for an enhancement to the client and server software to be made to automate the copying, applying naming conventions and folder structures. A recommendation was also made for automated, VPN based electronic transfer to be piloted where the necessary internet services were available.

IHEC responded favorably to IFES' recommendation on the electronic transfer of registration files. However, it indicated that it believed that the required national infrastructure was not adequate. IFES responded with a follow-up letter to the CEO to the effect that a number of areas should support electronic transfer of data, and that a pilot should be undertaken to verify whether the concept is feasible.

IFES advisors have been also working on data privacy issues. In Iraq, IHEC is acting on behalf of the state. Data collected will not remain within the sphere of IHEC, and will in all probability be made available to other government departments. This does not violate any legal principles providing claims of data privacy are not made.

Citizen data can be divided into two main categories – personal, or public data, and sensitive data. Personal data allows one to identify an individual – name, voter number, ID number. Sensitive data describes ideological and private information about the individual – religion, ethnicity, etc. This may include things like biometric information. There is obviously an overlap in this data – gender is both personal and, in some countries, sensitive. In some countries, the name can indicate religion. Personal data should be available on the published registers, although sensitive data should not be. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the collection of sensitive data. Statistical analysis of this data can help in delimitation decisions without exposing individuals.

Iraq is currently implementing a biometric National ID system under the Ministry of Interior (MoI). IFES, in October 2013, submitted a letter to IHEC indicating the need for a level of cooperation with the MoI. This meeting was held in July, 2014. From the report generated, which was provided to IFES during this reporting period, it become clear that additional guidance in the principles of data privacy was necessary. IFES took two key steps to address this. First, a short paper was drafted outlining some of the risks of integration and data sharing between IHEC and

the MoI and a list of recommendations, including a strong outreach campaign to encourage citizens to register, was included in the document as well.

Second, a scope of work was developed for a consultant to prepare an analysis on data privacy in Iraq, which needs to identify and discuss data sensitivity issues throughout the entire electoral cycle and recommendations that identify necessary legal or regulatory changes and procedural changes at the IHEC level to ensure data privacy. This paper will encompass long term recommendations for a country-wide approach to the issue, to be addressed by the CoR.

Activity 2.4.2: Electronic Voting

During the second half of 2013, IHEC invested heavily in technology to reduce fraud and increase accuracy and reliability in the electoral process. The Spanish company Indra was selected to supply an automated voter registration system (which included polling station identification) for the CoR elections in April 2014. It is envisaged that electronic voting (e-voting) will be the next step in this automation process.

In order to assist IHEC in achieving a better understanding of its requirements, IFES has proposed holding a two-day workshop on electronic voting in early March 2015. IFES has developed a workshop outline that will provide insight into the practicalities of implementation of electronic voting as well as a demonstration component showing the functioning of an electornic voting machine. Work is underway on a document that will be presented at the workshop to outline the benefits and the pitfalls of the technology to give IHEC balance in its decision making when it looks at the various vendor offerings. Lastly, the importance of public outreach will be discussed.

Activity 2.6: Support to IHEC in preparation and implementation of the District and Sub-District Elections and Kirkuk referendum

Activity 2.6.1: District and Sub-District Elections

The district and sub districts elections (DSEs) are required by law to be conducted six months after the Governorate Councils elections (GCE). Iraq conducted two GCEs in 2009 and 2013 and has yet to conduct the DSEs. The current councils continued exercising their role and authorities granted by the laws since they were established in 2004.[1]

In August 2013, the IHEC BoC and the Committee on Regions and Governorates Not Organized by a Region (CRGR) agreed to develop a roadmap and measures to implement the DSE regulated by the Law no.36 of 2008 The Elections of the Governorates Councils, Districts and Sub-districts Elections. In September 2013, IFES was approached by IHEC to assist in the preparations of the

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[1] Law no. 36 of 2008 Article 46 /Third: *In case the elections were postponed, the provincial, districts, and sub-districts councils shall continue to run its own affairs until new councils are elected.*

district and sub-district council elections, which are necessary to establish localized democratic leadership and structures. IFES conducted a workshop on district and sub-district elections in November 2013, which laid out the foundations of identifying challenges and planning for this electoral event. However, as Members of Parliament changed in 2014, and with that the membership of the members of the Parliamentary Committee of Regions and Provinces, it is necessary to conduct another activity that builds on this workshop.

On October 23, the IHEC Spokesperson announced that IHEC will not be able to conduct the districts and sub-districts elections in one day throughout Iraq due to difficulties concerning voters' lists, as each one of the districts and sub-districts will be considered one constituency according to the law. However, having all the necessary data, IHEC is ready to conduct the district councils elections in 80 out of 117 districts. IHEC requires approximately 220 days (extended from the previously required 180 days due to changes in the procurement policies). Therefore, the elections should be scheduled for July 2015.

Following the announcement, the IFES CoP held a meeting with the Deputy Chairman responsible for the planning and preparation of the district and sub-district elections. They agreed to organize a districts and sub-districts elections planning workshop with participation of the BoC and the new members of the Parliamentary Committee of Regions and Provinces. The workshop objective is to coordinate between IHEC and the Committee in planning for the elections and to discuss the resources available and the challenges IHEC will face, including considering the current security situation in several provinces. The discussions of the participants should produce solutions and clarifications on the following issues: borders disputes status; required legal framework to conduct the elections; special needs voting and IDPs; voters' registration update requirements; distribution of polling stations; and distribution of voters to polling stations. The workshop concept paper and agenda have been submitted to the Deputy Chairman with proposed dates in February 2015.

Activity 2.7: Support IHEC in development of an improved legal framework for electoral processes

IFES continued working with IHEC on providing day-to-day monitoring and training to the Legal Consultation and Complaints Section (LCCS), in addition to the Complaints Units at the GEO level.

The Section provided approximately 20 legal opinions to the BoC, mainly concerning the complaints submitted to IHEC questioning the eligibility of the CoR elections candidates and issues concerning the IHEC staff at the NO and the GEOs. The IFES Electoral Legal Advisor (ELA) provided legal advice when needed during his daily meetings with the LCCS Manger. The advice was also provided to help the Section to clarify its responsibilities in order not to overlap with the responsibilities of the Legal Section at the Electoral Administration. The advice provided was to limit the LCCS responsibilities to ones related to electoral complaints, appeals, and any other legal cases related to the technical side of the electoral process and/or related to the elections

stakeholders. The Legal Section at the Electoral Administration should be responsible for all the cases of a legal responsibility and/or administrative nature.

During the reporting period, IFES intended to conduct a special training workshop for the GEOs Legal Units staff concerning the categorization, investigation, recommendations, and publications of appeals. In addition, IFES was planning to provide the KREO with the necessary assistance to establish a complaints office to support the complaints process - based on the recommendation produced earlier by the IHEC staff during the lessons learned activities. Hovewer, the BoC has not yet approved any of the recommendations from the series of the lessons learned activities concerning the 2014 CoR elections conducted in the second half of 2014. Therefore, the proposed training has been postponed.

Finaly, IFES' ELA prepared an analysis of the legal requirements and the process of forming a Basra Region, including steps required from the IHEC side, according to law number 13 of 2008, the Executive Procedures for Forming the Regions Law.

Objective 3: IHEC Capacity to Manage External Affairs with Key Electoral Stakeholders is Improved

The need for IHEC to develop an effective media relations strategy and a strategy for engaging all electoral stakeholders was identified during the design of the ESP and much work has been done since the inception of the project. To build on these efforts and further assist IHEC in implementing an effective outreach strategy and to solidify IHEC's reputation as an independent, neutral and transparent institution, IFES supported IHEC with the following activities.

Activity 3.1: Implementation of a strategic communications plan

IFES continued to work with and support IHEC on the development of a Communications Plan. IFES has supported IHEC in the development of a process to identify, develop and monitor an organizational communications methodology which is repeatable and sustainable.

Following a submission of the strategic communication objectives paper drafted by IFES, the BoC assigned Commissioner Gulshan Kamal and the CEO to develop an outline of mechanisms to implement the strategic communication and to nominate members of the strategic communication committee. The established Committee consists of the BoC Commissioner responsible for communication, the POD Director and the CBD Director. It has been decided that, to avoid any confusion with the overall IHEC strategic plan, the strategic communication plan should be referred to as the "communication plan."

On November 24, the Organizational Management Advisor (OMA) and CoP held a meeting with the Head of the IHEC Communications Committee (CC) to review the draft CC charter and discuss

the action process methodology and next steps. The meeting participants also planned a follow on meeting schedule and plan to address concerns and opportunities for interactions in the future.

In November, the OMA facilitated a number of the CC meetings to review and approve the charter and action process methodology. The OMA and CC members agreed to draft an agenda for subsequent meetings with stakeholders and to set up a regular scheduled weekly meeting of the committee. Participants discussed monthly reporting requirements, and further refined the purpose and participation requirements of sub-committees.

On December 28–29, IFES implemented the Communications Committee Planning Workshop in Erbil. The goal of the workshop was to finalize the communication plan by bringing together the primary IHEC Communications Committee members and members of the Public Outreach Sections at the GEOs. Also, the workshop aimed to align the communications plan with IHEC's strategic goals and the communications committee goals and ensure that ownership of specific tasks and next steps are established. The workshop was attended by a total of 32 participants (of whom five were female) from the NO and GEOs, including two Commissioners.

Figure 3: Communications Committee Planning Workshop, December 28-29, 2014

Through the presentation of the framework of the communication plan, which was developed by the Communications Committee in coordination with IFES, the participants gave their input for the plan by suggesting a number of activities. The participants also held a stakeholder analysis session to practice how to analyze the electoral stakeholder in order to maintain and enhance the relationship and communication between IHEC and stakeholders.

Activity 3.2: Capacity building training in the design, implementation and conduct of voter information and educational programs - Conduct of National Surveys

Through the 2014 nationwide public opinion survey fielded after the CoR elections, IFES has collected information related to the implementation of AVR, voter registration, and the media campaign for those elections and also information related to how voter's experience with AVR may be improved in the next implementation stages. This information will be used to advise IHEC on technical and public outreach activities. The data will also enable IFES and IHEC to identify target groups for public outreach, the types of messages that should be created, and the best vehicles for delivery.

The IFES 2014 survey was conducted in 15 of Iraq's 18 provinces between October 11 and November 8, 2014 by the Independent Institute for Administration and Civil Society Studies (IIACSS). Three governorates (Anbar, Ninawah, and Salah ad-Din) were excluded from the sampling frame due to the conflict situation in these provinces. At the time of the survey fieldwork, these provinces were either a war zone or controlled by IS forces. This made survey fieldwork impossible in these provinces without putting the life of interviewers under high risk.

The sample size was 2,000 respondents who were randomly selected and interviewed face-to-face in their homes. The sample was stratified proportionately and the margin of error was 1.96, within a 95% confidence interval, assuming a pure random sample.

The main results of the survey are summarized below along typical areas[2]:

- **Adequacy of Information ahead of 2014 Council of Representatives Election**

In the lead up to the 2014 Council of Representatives Election, Iraqis seemed to have adequate information on some aspects of the election while needing more information on others. Voters had the least information about vote counting and how candidates are elected with a full 73% saying they needed more information on this. Similarly, 59% said they needed more information on participating political parties and on candidates and campaigns. Moreover, 50% of respondents said they needed more information on the electronic card, compared to 46% who said they have enough information. It is noteworthy that for almost all election aspects, significantly more women than men say they need more information. This shows that while both men and women need more information on several aspects of the election, the information gap is larger for women.

Aspects of the election for which a majority of Iraqis report having adequate information include information on where to vote (68%), information on voter registration (59%), and on voting procedures and how to mark the ballot (57%). Yet this leaves approximately two in five Iraqis who need more information on these aspects. There is also a large gender gap in voter information regarding voter registration and voting procedures with significantly more women than men needing more information.

- **Preferred Information Sources for Election-Related Issues**

TV tops the list of information sources to learn about elections for Iraqis with large majorities indicating talkshow programs on TV (72%) and news programs on TV (65%) are their preferred sources to learn about election-related issues and procedures. This is followed by word of mouth (43%), talkshow programs on radio (25%), billboards (18%), news programs on radio (13%), brochures/flyers (13%), and information on the internet (10%).

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[2] A final survey results report will be available in the next quarter.

The top five information sources are the same for men and women yet with significantly more women (52%) citing word of mouth as a preferred source of information than men (36%). For young Iraqis aged 18-34, preferred information sources on elections do not vary significantly from Iraqis at large.

- **Knowledge of the Electronic Voting Card**

A large majority of Iraqis (72%) report having at least a fair amount of knowledge (55%) about the new electronic voting card that was used to vote in the 2014 Council of Representatives Election and a few (17%) have a great deal of knowledge compare with a quarter of Iraqis who know very little (19%) or nothing at all (7%) about the electronic voting card.
There is a significant gender and age gap in knowledge of the electronic voting card with more women and more people 55 or older lacking knowledge about the new electronic voting card than average. Meanwhile, Sunni Kurds are the most likely to lack knowledge of the card compared with other ethnic/sectarian groups.

In terms of information sources, over nine in 10 respondents with some awareness of the electronic cards indicate they heard about it through word of mouth, satellite TV or local TV. Other less cited sources include billboards, leaflets and radio.

- **Information Campaign on Electronic Cards**

Nearly three in 10 (29%) Iraqis were able to spontaneously mention the slogan "It's easy" that was used in the campaign launched by IHEC to encourage citizens to pick up their electronic voting cards. This compares to a 56% majority who were unable to recall any messages encouraging citizens to pick up their electronic cards. The campaign seems to have had deeper reach in the South where 38% were able to spontaneously recall the slogan than the North (28%) or the Center (27%).

When specifically prompted about the slogan "It's easy" and asked if they heard it as part of the campaign encouraging people to pick up their electronic cards, the share of Iraqis who recognize the slogan increases from 29% (unprompted recall) to a full 65% majority (aided recall) who say yes they heard it and the remaining 35% say no.

- **Use of Electronic Cards in Recent and Future Elections**

Iraqis seem generally optimistic about the benefits of the electronic voting card, with a large majority (86%) believing it would improve the electoral process. There are no gender differences on this question, but there are differences by ethnic/sectarian profiles with only 31% of Sunni Kurds believing the electronic card would significantly improve the electoral process compared

with majorities of both Sunni Arabs (58%) and Shia Arabs (57%) believing it would significantly improve the process.

A full 93% of respondents reported picking up their electronic card ahead of the April 2014 elections. Iraqis seem essentially satisfied with the efficiency of the process of picking their electronic card with 55% saying it was very efficient and 36% saying it was somewhat efficient.

Use of the electronic card on Election Day was mostly without problems; however, 10% of voters reported experiencing problems. Voters in the South and Iraqi Kurdistan were slightly more likely to experience problems with the use of the electronic card than voters in the Center. The most cited problems with the electronic card relate to the card being rejected by the machine despite the voter being on the voter list, long queues building up because the electronic card reader was slow, the electronic card reader being unable to scan voters' fingerprints, and polling staff not knowing how to use the electronic card reader.

Nearly two-thirds of Iraqis (65%) were unaware electronic cards used in upcoming elections may have voters' fingerprints and photo. Although largely unaware of this, an overwhelming 85% of Iraqis were either very comfortable (52%) or somewhat comfortable (33%) with the capture of biometric information for electronic cards.

The few respondents who said they would feel uncomfortable mentioned it is primarily because collecting biometric data might be a problem for people not acquainted with the technology and because it may pose a problem for older people in general.

- **Registering for the 2014 Council of Representatives Election**

Three quarters of respondents (75%) have registered to vote in the April 2014 elections compared with 23% who did not. Slightly more men (77%) than women (71%) have registered to vote. By age groups, the difference in registration rates is not statistically significant.

A plurality of those who did not register (43%) said it is because their name already exists on the register. If we add up those who went to register and those who are already registered based on our survey sample, the share of those registered to vote in the 2014 elections reaches 85% of respondents. Sunni Arabs who did not register for the 2014 elections were nearly twice as many to respond that their name already exists on the register (60%), compared with Shia Arabs (34%) and Sunni Kurds (31%). Other reasons given for not registering include not being interested/not caring about elections, not going to the registration center, not having their card, illness, and believing that their voice is useless.

Over two-thirds of respondents who actively registered for the 2014 elections (68%) checked their registration status at the voter registration center themselves and 41% had a family member check

their status on their behalf. Some 20% checked their registration status on the IHEC website and 10% called the IHEC call center. Only 3% called the Governorate Electoral Office (GEOs) to check their registration status. In sum, over a quarter of Iraqis who are registered (27%) did not take any steps to check their status.

- **Perceptions of Voter List Accuracy**

Just over a third of Iraqis (35%) believe the voter list is accurate to a great extent while 39% believe it is accurate to some extent, meanwhile, 6% believed the voter list only accurate to a limited extent and another 6% believed the voter list is inaccurate.

When comparing to the 2012 IFES survey, we notice that assessments of voter list accuracy have improved slightly: in 2014, slightly more respondents (74%) believed the voter list is overall accurate compared with 2012 (68%).

Perceptions of voter list accuracy show significant differences by ethnic/sectarian profiles and by region, with a quarter of Sunni Kurds believing the voter list is only accurate to a limited extent (11%) or inaccurate (14%) compared to 14% of Sunni Arabs and 7% of Shia Arabs.

In terms of the IHEC CVR educational campaign, IFES was informed by the POD Director that due to financial constraints, IHEC is not currently conducting a CVR media campaign at the NO level. However, the POD is providing guidelines to the GEOs to develop and implement their campaigns. The POD is also working on two reports on the 2014 CoR elections: the POD work and achievements during the elections and the total cost of the voter education campaign at the NO and GEOs level.

Activity 3.4: Support the IHEC Electoral Education Institute

In January 2014, the BoC approved establishing the Electoral Education Institute (EEI) at IHEC and also identified a potential location outside IHEC in Baghdad-Rusafa that is easily accessible to the public. The EEI was established as a section under the CEO office with two sections: electronic library and electoral research and with six staff members seconded from the IHEC NO.

However, the overall goal, objectives, strategy, equipment needs, activities and programs of the Institute are yet to be considered and decided. The successful establishment of the EEI at IHEC is of crucial significance towards the realization of the broader goal of reforming and improving the management and administration of the electoral process in Iraq.

Therefore, IFES has supported IHEC in the initial development of a strategic roadmap for the future use of the EEI to offer a continued growth and accessibility to the educational resources available. In October, IFES met with the Electoral Skills Section Head to discuss an assessment process of the Building Resources in Demcracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE)

methodology and training implemented thus far and to discuss further trainings for the IHEC EEI staff members.

On November 27, IHEC held the EEI official opening ceremony at the Institute building located in Baghdad-Rusafa. The event was attended by members of the current and the previous IHEC BoC, representatives of different ministries and governmental institutions, local non-governmental organizations and media. The Institute will offer educational and training materials and specific training programs to different electoral stakeholders. Its establishment comes as the IHEC effort to institutionalize the educational and training activities that will enable the stakeholders to carry out their respective roles and responsibilities more effectively. IFES' CoP and Deputy CoP attended the ceremony.

In December IFES met with the Director of the EEI and discussed the next steps and long-term strategic actions of the Institute. The next steps are to conduct the BRIDGE trainings utilizing the media and election module for the IHEC trainers. The trainings will be conducted in February – May, 2015.

II.   FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Table 3: IFES-Facilitated Workshops, January – March 2015[3]

Workshop title	Targeted group (# of participants)	Venue	Duration	Proposed date
Procurement, Bids, and Government Contracts Training (third session)	No and GEOs Finance and Audit Departments staff (30 participants)	Erbil	4 days	January 11 - 14
Training on the operational procedures and maintenance of the verification and registration electronic devices (two sessions)	No and GEOs VRC staff (30 participants each session)	Erbil	4 days	January 18 – 21 Januart 23 - 26
District and Sub-District Elections Planning Workshop	IHEC BoC, Directors, and representatives of the Parliamentary Committee of Regions and Provinces (20 participants)	Erbil	2 days	February TBD
National Media Conference	BoC, Media Section, Communication Committee, external media representatives (60 participants)	Baghdad	1 day	February TBD
Electronic Voting Options in Iraq	IHEC BoC, Directors, and GEOs Managers (35 participants)	Erbil	2 days	March TBD

[3] This chart is indicative of IFES workshops in the next quarter. Dates and content are subject to change pending operational requirements and IHEC approvals.

III.   QUARTERLY PROJECT BURN RATE

IV.   CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS UPDATE

This past quarter presented ESP with major challenges to two of its critical assumptions due to the escalated violence in the country.

The assumption that *a secure environment is key to successful implementation of project activities* came into the forefront of external factors influencing the implementation of the project. During the period, a substantial part of the country's territory was taken over by Sunni extremists, thus sparking national, regional and global alarm over the security and political situation in Iraq.

Also, the assumption that *IHEC will receive adequate funding from the Government of Iraq to perform its functions* came up as an external factor influencing the implementation of the project. During the reporting period, the continuous voter registration continued only in 11 governorates with a limited number of polling centers opened. There was no formal media campaign, and IHEC was reaching the population by word-of-mouth, encouraging potential applicants to register by knocking on doors and approaching local religious, tribal, and civic leaders. The need for a formal, coordinated media campaign is well recognized by IHEC, and awaiting a proper budget allocation (as of time of writing, the Iraq 2015 federal budget is not finalized yet). Lack of understanding of the process and the motivation behind it is causing some resistance to register amongst the voting public, according to IHEC.

V.   CONCLUSIONS

IFES' accomplishments in FY15 Q1 continued with the successful implementation of the ESP. IFES provided essential support to IHEC during the initial phase of the continuous voter registration and establishing of the Electoral Education Institute. The IHEC management and staff have praised IFES' ability to react quickly to training needs and to implement high quality trainings and workshops especially given the IHEC budgetary limitations.

In addition, IFES provided assistance in the strategic planning and communication planning processes. The IHEC strategic planning document was finalized and publicized on the IHEC website and the process of monitoring and evaluation has been initiated.

Additionally, IFES finalized work on the second nationwide survey gaudging for public opinion on the election process in 2014 as well as fielding for information that will inform the biometric registration process. The final results will be presented to USAID and IHEC in FY15 Q2.